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Story last updated at 5:08 p.m. Tuesday, November 25, 2003

New families celebrate special day in **Hillsdale County**

Adoptions finalized today in Hillsdale County **Probate Court**



Michigan will give thanks to adoptive families today during the first state Adoption Day, an event sponsored by the Michigan Supreme Court and Family Independence Agency.

With assistance from local FIA offices and private adoption agencies, courts in 33 counties will finalize adoptions for more than 200 children that day, hold celebrations for adoptive families, and provide information about the adoption process.

In Hillsdale County, the Probate Court and the Family Independence Agency staff will be finalizing a few adoptions with cookies from the Jonesville Bakery and other items from Smith's Flowers and from the Family Independence Agency.

Hillsdale County Probate Judge Michael E. Nye said he hopes the event will draw attention not only to the adoption process, but also to the number of children available for adoption.

"It will show that there are children right here in the local area that can be adopted," Nye said. "You don't have to go overseas to find children. There are homes for children to be raised in and taken care of. To do so, one needs to contact the court and FIA for opportunities."

FIA director Nannette Bowler said the event is the first time Michigan has ever held a statewide event to celebrate adoptions.

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"Michigan Adoption Day will bring the adoption process to the forefront," said Bowler. "FIA staff and private agencies under contract to the state helped place 2,833 children into loving adoptive homes in fiscal year 2002. Almost 2,000 of these children were in sibling groups needing adoption."

Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Maura D. Corrigan said Michigan has thousands of children in foster care as a result of child protective proceedings.

"Most of them hope to return to a home where abuse or neglect is not present, but many can never return home again," Corrigan said. "Those are the children for whom adoption is the only answer."

A work group convened by the Michigan Supreme Court in cooperation with the Michigan Family Independence Agency recently released a report on issues in Michigan's adoption system. The group noted that in Michigan, as of July 31, 2003, 12,673 children were temporary wards of the court as a result of child protective proceedings. As of that date, a total of 19,490 children were in foster care.

Today's event will help celebrate National Adoption Month in November, where Nov. 22 was been designated National Adoption Day. Although a number of courts and other states are participating in National Adoption Day activities, national organizers say the Michigan event appears to be the largest statewide event in the country.

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